



## News Release

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### **Family Trees Can Be Picture of Future Health**

*Collect Family Health History at Your Summer Reunion*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – As families gather at reunions this summer, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) urges all Utahns to talk about their family health history. To help, UDOH is offering a free Family Reunion packet.

“Summer reunions are a great time to get your entire family involved in learning about your health history,” said Jenny Johnson, Health Program Specialist with the UDOH Chronic Disease Genomics Program. “Many families already share their genealogy during their reunions so talking about your health history is easy. And it can help you discover what lifestyle and screening choices can help you stay healthy.”

Rose Park resident Libbey Chuy is grateful to have learned about her family’s medical history at a reunion. “I was so glad my family did this. You’re at a reunion because you love each other. Talking about your health history is an extension of that love because you want to help each other stay healthy,” said Chuy.

Six months later, Chuy collected health histories from her husband’s family. “No one had gathered the information before. When you’re young you don’t think about getting diabetes or colon cancer, but once you write it down, it’s really eye-opening. I don’t want to go through the same health problems I’ve seen generations of my family suffer through.”

The Family Reunion packet includes fun ideas, conversation starters, games, and other resources to help Utahns take the steps to collect their health history. These include:

- Talking about their family health history at family reunions.
- Writing down what they learn.
- Sharing the history with their health care provider and other family members who can benefit from the information.

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“Not only can it be life-saving for some families, but learning about your family health history can be fun, too,” said Johnson.

For those who may feel uncomfortable talking about their health history, the packets provide games that can get members of all ages involved in the learning process.

“For us, talking about it wasn’t invasive,” said Chuy. “We spent maybe 10 or 15 minutes on it at our reunion. And it’s made a huge impact on how I live my life.”

Chronic health problems like heart disease, asthma, cancer, and diabetes tend to run in families. When close relatives have the same health problem, or develop one at a young age, it can increase other family members’ risk.

It’s also important to share what you learn with your health care provider. Physicians can help you better understand your risk and recommend lifestyle choices and screening tests to lower that risk.

To get a free Family Reunion packet, visit [www.health.utah.gov/genomics](http://www.health.utah.gov/genomics) or call the Health Resource Line at 1-888-222-2542.

If you have been affected by a health problem that runs in your family, we want to hear from you. Share your story with the Utah Health Story Bank at <http://health.utah.gov/bhp/sb/> and help others know the importance of collecting their family health history.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*